

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., is fighting this week to increase the minimum wage, which is at its lowest point in 50 years when adjusted for inflation. The minimum wage has not been increased since 1997, and the Republican-controlled Congress has blocked all efforts to increase it.

"While the wealthiest few Americans are prospering under the Bush economy, millions of working Americans who earn the minimum wage are struggling to afford the basic necessities for their families," Jackson said. "Raising the minimum wage is an issue of fairness, and it's one of the Democrats' top priorities."

Last week, Democrats successfully attached in Committee an amendment to raise the minimum wage to the FY07 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Bill. The amendment is based on a Democratic bill that would gradually increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 over two years. The minimum wage amendment passed in Committee with bipartisan support, but Republican leaders have stopped the Labor-Health bill from coming to the Floor this week as previously scheduled because they fear an attempt to strip the minimum wage increase from the bill would fail.

"Congress has not raised the minimum wage since 1997, and an increase is beyond overdue," Jackson added. "A minimum wage earner who works full-time all year earns just \$10,700, leaving them well below the poverty line. This is simply not acceptable in America. More than 80 percent of the American people support an increase in the minimum wage, and Democrats will continue pushing for action on this issue until Republicans allow a fair vote."

In the United States, 7.3 million people would benefit from a raise in the minimum wage, including 1.8 million parents with children. Nearly three-quarters of minimum wage workers are adults over the age of 20, and many are responsible for over half of their family's income.

Jackson has signed a "discharge petition," which would force a Floor vote on the Democrats' minimum wage bill if supporters secure 218 Member signatures. There are currently 189 signatures on the petition.